

A Worker's Guide to Office of Labor Standards Investigations

Our staff will **never** ask about immigration status. We provide language interpretation and accommodations for disAbility-related needs. Our services are **free**.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

What can I talk to the Office of Labor Standards (OLS) about? Can I remain anonymous?

OLS answers questions and takes complaints about Seattle's labor laws. When you contact OLS, **you may remain anonymous** by asking when you contact us!



How do I make a complaint? Can I bring someone with me?

You can make a complaint by phone or email, through our website, or by visiting our office. Our contact information can be found at the end of this document. Yes, you can bring a support person or a representative with you, and anyone can act as your representative throughout an investigation.

What happens when I make a complaint?

OLS will talk to you about the problem and collect important papers such as paystubs, photos of timecards, or your employee handbook. After reviewing the information, OLS will decide how to help you, either by investigating your employer or by referring you to our community partners and other agencies that might be able to help.

Will OLS investigate my employer?

Because we cannot investigate all cases, we focus on violations affecting low-wage workers and apply certain priorities for which cases we can take. One of these limits is that OLS will investigate cases where workers earn at or below approximately **150% of Seattle's minimum wage**, including tips and commissions. For a list of the current priorities, please visit the OLS website. If we can't help you, we will connect you with someone who can.



Does OLS have a waitlist?

If OLS can't investigate your employer immediately, we may place you on a waitlist.

INVESTIGATION

What happens during the investigation?

We notify your employer about the investigation and ask them for information and documents. We will interview other workers and witnesses. We often use your help to identify others who are willing to provide information that is helpful to the investigation. OLS will typically investigate the **entire company** to identify all affected workers. **We will not reveal your identity to the employer** unless you give permission or unless required by law. An investigation into retaliation against a single worker is the only time that we require permission to disclose your identity so we can properly investigate the case.



INVESTIGATION (CONTINUED)

How long will the investigation take?

Our goal is to complete fair, thorough and effective investigations. Our investigations are a **free service** that **takes time**, especially when the investigation involves multiple laws and many workers. OLS aims to resolve investigations in 6-12 months, but investigations sometimes take longer.

RESOLUTION

How will the investigation end?

The investigation will end after OLS collects the evidence it needs to decide whether violations took place. If violations occurred, OLS will calculate how much money is owed and, when appropriate, require other remedies (like policy changes). OLS will settle with an employer as long as they are willing to fix the problems and pay workers back. If an employer refuses to correct problems or will not agree to the payments OLS calculated, OLS will issue an order that requires the employer to pay. The employer may appeal this order to the Seattle Office of Hearing Examiner. If OLS does not have enough evidence to find violations, OLS will issue an order determining that no violations occurred. Affected workers may appeal this order to the Seattle Office of Hearing Examiner.



PAY FOR
MONEY
OWED

If OLS finds violations, **all workers affected by violations at the company** will receive money owed to them, going back three years from the start of the investigation.

You can read summaries of closed investigations on the OLS website.

Will OLS contact me when the investigation is over?

If money is owed to you, OLS will contact you to arrange for the money to be provided to you. OLS may also contact you to collect anonymous and voluntary demographic information to help us better serve the community.

Where can I view data about OLS's investigations?

We provide comprehensive data about worker contacts, open and resolved cases, financial remedies awarded to workers, and the number and type of compliance questions we receive from employers. To view this information, please view the **Interactive Dashboards** on the OLS website.

Contact OLS!

OLS offers free translation and interpretation services upon request.



In person

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By phone

(206) 256-5297



By e-mail or web

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